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TEXTUAL NOTES ON *BEOWULF*

After an interval of several years a number of *Anglia* (Vol. XLII, No. 1) arrived at the library of the University of Minnesota. Of the articles contained in it one proved of especial interest to me, namely Ernst A. Kock's "Interpretations and Emendations of Early English Texts. IV" (pp. 99-124), being a set of notes on the textual interpretation of *Beowulf*. As my edition of *Beowulf* is being put into type at present, and no additional comments of any length can be inserted in the text of my Notes, I ask permission to state here my views on a few passages discussed by Professor Kock. The fact that in the following details I cannot agree with the Swedish scholar should not be construed as a reflection on his distinctly valuable contribution to Beowulfian studies.

22-4. *þæt hine on ylde eft gewunigen*
wilgesīpas, þonne wig cume,
lēode gelēsten.

Kock proposes to take *lēode* as the dative of *lēod*, 'lord,' 'prince,' so that *lēode gelēsten* and *hine gewunigen* would be considered exactly parallel expressions. The objection to this new explanation is that it presupposes an unwarranted function of *lēod*. It has been generally assumed, apparently without looking into the matter, that the singular *lēod* carries the plain meaning of 'prince,' 'chief.' But what is the evidence? In the Laws *lēod* denotes both 'man,' 'person': *gif man lēud ofslā*, Wiht. 25—also 'fine for slaying a man,' 'wergild,' *Æðelb. 22* (evidently an abbreviation of *lēodgeld*)—and 'member of a tribe or nation': *gif hwā his āgenne lēod* (MS. H) *bebycge* (Varr.: *gelēod, lēodan, compatrio-*

tam), Ine 11. (Perhaps the former meaning should not be separated from the latter.) The same function is well illustrated from two passages in *Bede*, viz. *þæt hē wære Bretta lēod*, 180.13 = de natione Brettonum (Varr.: *lēode*, of *Brytta lēode*, of *Bretta þēode*); *sē was Contwara lēod* 194.2 = oriundum de gente Cantuariorum (Var.: *lēode*).¹ A reminder of this old meaning² of 'member of a tribe,' 'countryman,' is the fact that the plural *lēode*—unlike *men(n)*, *guman*, *weras*, *secgas*, etc.—is in most instances in *Beowulf* used with a genitive plural (*Gēata*, *Wedera*, *Deniga*, *Swēona*) or a possessive pronoun expressed or understood (as in *læddon tō lēodum* 1159).

It may be mentioned here that the deviations from the normal declensional type of *lēod*, plural *lēode*, resulting in the formation of a feminine *lēod* are satisfactorily explained by the analogical influence of *þēod*.

Now, in the earlier poetical texts, *lēod* appears frequently with a genitive plural denoting a tribe or people, e. g., *Secgena lēod*, *Finnsb.* 24; *Ebrēa lēod*, *Gen.* 2163,—expressions that bear a striking resemblance to a combination like *ides Helminga*, *Beow.* 620, or again, (*Hrēpel*) *Gēata*, *Beow.* 374. In accordance with the heroic contents and the idealizing manner of the poetry, this *lēod* naturally assumed the sense of 'noble member of a tribe,' 'member of the nobility'; thus *Wulfgār* is called *Wendla lēod*, *Beow.* 348, *Wiglāf*, *lēod Scylfinga*, *ib.* 2603, *Bēowulf* (even before his accession to the throne), *Weder-Gēata lēod*, *ib.* 1492. As it could be applied to kings as well as to ordinary nobles (see *Beow.* 1653, 2159, 2551),³ it was perhaps occasionally understood as 'chief,' 'prince,' but was *never used without the qualifying genitive plural containing the name of the people*.⁴ In other words, the semantic development never went as far as in the case of *þēoden* (cf. *þēod*), which

¹ Cf. *Anglia*, xxvii, 272.

² Which is not necessarily the exact basic meaning in primitive Germanic or Pre-Germanic, see *New English Dictionary*, s. v. *lede*.

³ With *Finnsb.* 24: *Secgena lēod* may be compared *Wids.* 31: *Sæferð [wēold] Sycgum*.—The one example of the corresponding expression in Old Norse, *Völundarkv.* 13: *álfa ljóði*, has been commonly translated by 'prince of elves,' but Lünig defines *ljóði* as 'Landsmann,' and the Cleasby-Vigfusson rendering is 'the elf-man.'

⁴ On the other hand, *cýning* appears only once with such a gen. plur. in *Beowulf*.

is freely used without such a complement, either alone or in conjunction with an epithet like *mære*.

- 86-7. *Dā se ellengæst earfoðlice*
þrāge gepolode, sē þe in þýstrum bād. . . .

Kock connects *earfoðlice* (acc. sing. fem.) with *þrāge*, "an irksome time," supporting it by reference to *earfoðþrāge þolian*, 283 f. This is certainly tempting. But something may be said in favor of the usual explanation of *earfoðlice* as adverb. Perhaps the separation of *þrāge* from *earfoðlice*, though somewhat out of the ordinary, need not be seriously objected to. It is more important to note that in a corresponding passage (telling of the dragon's impatience to fall upon his enemies), which clearly harks back to the lines in question,⁵ we read: *Hordweard onbād / earfoðlice, oð ðæt æfen cwōm*, 2302 f. This is not decisive, but deserving of consideration. Which interpretation is right?

- 189-90. *Swā ðā mælcceare maga Healfdenes*
singāla sēað.

- 1992-3. *Ic ðæs mōdceare*
sorhwylmum sēað.

Exception is taken by Kock to the explanation, based on the regular transitive use of *sēoðan*, which assigns a vigorous metaphorical sense to the unique phrase, literally 'he caused the care to well up,' i. e. 'he was agitated by care.' Kock virtually returns to Heyne's view in translating *ceare sēoðan*, literally 'seethe in care,' i. e. 'be tormented or agitated by care.' After careful consideration I see no reason to abandon my interpretation (*Archiv*, cxxvi, 351).

The well-known instances showing "the sufferer," not "the tormenting thing or feeling" as "the logical object of the transitive *sēoðan*," viz. *mid þý hē . . . nearonissum his mōdes ond mid þý blindan fyre soden wæs*, *Bede* 128.14 f.; *hēo . . . mid þā untrumnesse . . . soden wæs*, *ib.* 290.8; *Herebyrht wæs ær mid singālre untrumnesse soden ond gewenced*, *ib.* 372.26 cannot be allowed any weight in the discussion, especially as two of them have all the appearance of being slavish renderings of the Latin *decoquere*. As to *mē searonet sēoðað*, which has also been cited, the form

⁵ The analogous case of *oð ðæt ān ongan / fyrene frem(m)an fēond on helle* 100 f., *oð ðæt ān ongan / deorcum nihtum draca rics[i]an* 2210 f. is well remembered.

sēoðað is, without doubt, an error for *sēowað*,—*mē elþēodige inwit-wrāsne*, / *searonet sēowað*, *Andr.* 63 f., cf. *Beow.* 406: *searonet sēowed* and 2167: *inwitnet . . bregdon*.

Besides, it is hazardous to operate with the intransitive use of *sēoðan*, which has not been established, although it might be admitted theoretically. More than that, conclusive evidence of the transitive function of *sēoðan* in 189 f. is afforded by *ðā*, which is not adverb, but definite article,—*ðā mælceare*, ‘that sorrow,’ referring to the king’s afflictions described before. It certainly remains to be shown that a combination *swā ðā* ‘so then’ is a possibility in *Beowulf*.

489-90. *Site nū tō symle ond onsæl meoto,*
sigehrēð secgum.

Kock understands *meota* (em.) as imperative of *me(o)tian*, which he construes with *on*, i. e. *on sæl*, [*on*] *sigehrēð*: “think on joy, on conquest’s glory for the men.” This, it will be seen, is practically a revival of Körner’s view (*Engl. Stud.* II, 251): “sei nur auf Heiterkeit bedacht, auf den Ruhm, der dir nebst deinen Mannen aus deinem Siege erwachsen wird.” I confess that I have serious doubts regarding this interpretation as well as my own former explanation (*Jour. of Eng. and Germ. Phil.* VI, 192 f.). After the metrical status of the imperative *onsæl* in 489^b has been vindicated by Professor Bright’s investigation (*Mod. Lang. Notes*, xxxi, 217-23), it seems best to me to take *meoto*—whatever its precise meaning may be—and *sigehrēð* as the objects of *onsæl*. That *sæl* should be meant here as ‘joy,’ is very far from probable, for the sense of ‘happiness,’ ‘joy,’ is almost entirely limited to the plural. (It is best known, of course, from the stereotyped expression *on sælum*.) Moreover, the function of the dative (*secgum*) is far less convincing in Kock’s version than in connection with a clause expressing the idea: ‘speak your mind freely’; cf. *Andr.* 171 f.: *þā him cirebaldum cininga wuldor*, / *Meotud mancynnes mōðhord onlēac*, *ib.* 315 f.

1783-4. *unc sceal worn fela*
māþma gemænra, siþðan morgen bið.

Here the emendation *gemæne* is recommended and, incidentally, reinforced by citing the commonly accepted emendation of 1857 (*gemæne*, MS. *ge mænnum*). Kock is undoubtedly right in his

observation that the predicative *gemæne* is what we should expect under ordinary circumstances. At the same time, the form *gemænra* is not necessarily to be laid at the door of an irresponsible scribe. It may very well be due to a natural process of attraction, by which the predicative relation became converted into an attributive one. I am confirmed in this belief by a few similar cases which have been incidentally noticed. *Chron. A. D. 871: þær wearð Sidroc eorl ofslægen . . . ond Osbearn eorl . . . ond Hareld eorl, ond þā hergas bēgen gefliemde, ond fela þūsenda ofslægenra* (MS. B: *ofslegen*), *ond onfeohrende wæron of niht; A. D. 1001: ðær wearð Æðelweard cinges hēahgefēra ofslegen . . . ond Wulfhere . . . ond Godwine . . . ond þær wearð þāra Denescra micla mā ofslegenra; ib.: hȳ ðær āflȳmede wurdon, ond ðær wearð fela ofslegenra.* Cf. *Oros. 17.31: fela spella him sædon þā Beormas . . ., ac hē nyste hwæt þæs sōþes wæs;⁶ Holy Rood-Tree* (ed. Napier) 24.13: *wolde witen hwæt his sōðes wære; also Mat. Rush. 27.19: nāwiht þē siæ on þām sōpfæste gemānes* (WS. texts: *gemæne*).

2163-4. *Hȳrde ic, þæt þām frætūm fēower mēaras
lungre gelice lūst weardode.*

Neither of the two current translations, viz. 'perfectly alike' and 'equally swift,' appeals to Professor Kock. "I think," he says, "that the two interpretations are, if not perfectly like, yet equally wrong." He regards *lungre gelice* as coördinate adjectives of the type *frome*, *fyrðhwate* 2476, *undyrne*, *cūð* 150, 410⁷ and translates: ". . . four horses . . . quick and all alike." This makes admirable sense. But in view of the fact that in all the instances of such asyndetic parataxis, whether of nouns or adjectives, the two coördinate members are synonymous or, at any rate, of distinctly similar import, and one of them is invariably a regular compound, a skeptical attitude may well be pardoned.

I beg to add here an illustrative passage from the *Hrólfs saga*, without insisting on its probative merits. *Drotning lætr leiða fram hesta tólf, alla rauða at lit, nema einn, sá var hvítr sem snjór; þeim skyldi Hrólfr konungr ríða; þessir váru þeir, sem bezt reynduz af öllum Aðils konungs hestum, allir albrynjaðir.* 89.9 ff. (ch. 29).

⁶ Possibly influenced by the legitimate use of the partitive genitive as in *ðeah hē nyte hwæt hē sōðes secge*, *Cur. Past.* 217. 15.

⁷ Cf. *Anglia*, xxviii, 440.

The great value of Professor Kock's textual studies lies in his application of the comparative method. His extensive knowledge of the minutest syntactical and stylistic details of Old English and related Germanic texts enables him to throw light on numerous passages which have suffered at the hands of commentators. But, of course, the subjective element can never be completely eliminated in such investigations. As an example, I mention the remarkable suggestion offered in regard to the allusion of 81-3, *sele . . . heaðowylma bād, / lāðan liges*—: "That the poet alludes to the universal conflagration and not to some future hostile deed, seems to me fairly probable." It is quite true that "the fated destruction of all things by fire is often alluded to in old literature." But there must be at least some sort of excuse for it. Is it not far more natural, we may ask—employing the same subjective method—that the mention of the typical hall called up the vision of its possible, if not probable fate in the genuine heroic fashion? (*Nibelungenlied*, *Völsungasaga*, *Njáls saga*, etc.).⁸ Besides, it is difficult to understand why the definite connection between ll. 81^b-83^a and 83^b-85 should be deliberately sacrificed.

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THE CONFESSION OF THE PRINCESS OF CLÈVES

Mr. Woodbridge in an interesting article¹ that has only just come to my notice reopens the discussion of a problem of literary research—*l'aveu de la Princesse de Clèves*. While suggesting a possible source, he omits from his discussion one of the most important elements in the case, and thus does not do full justice to his own contribution. I feel sure, therefore, that he will pardon my adding a few notes to his presentation of the subject.

Mme de La Fayette was one of the best-informed persons in

⁸ Cf. Earle's note on l. 781: ". . . it almost seems in this place that the thought is of destruction by fire as the natural end, sooner or later, of a timbern edifice,"—to which a quaint modern parallel is added.

¹ Mme de Montespan and *La Princesse de Clèves*, *Mod. Lang. Notes*, xxxiii, 79.